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Modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries: update on new strategic directions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Significant progress has been made by United Nations libraries during 2005 in the implementation of new activities to better support the core work of the Organization and in streamlining traditional library processes. United Nations libraries have worked together, through the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, to identify and adopt common standards and to find new directions, transforming their services to make them more relevant and effective. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has led this process by focusing on the training of Library staff to adapt to such changes; spearheading innovative services designed to give better support to staff and missions on information management; using technological tools; and enhancing internal communications and knowledge sharing. Library staff are becoming networking facilitators, creating learning opportunities for the exchange of new ideas and bringing information and knowledge to those who need it in their workplaces beyond the walls of the library. In order to reflect these changes and new focus, it is proposed that the official name of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library be expanded to the "Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge Sharing Centre".

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/109 B, the General Assembly: took note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries: new strategic directions (see A/AC.198/2005/4); called upon the Department of Public Information to continue to lead the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries; encouraged the member libraries of the Steering Committee to coordinate closely and to establish time frames for the fulfilment of its programme of work; took note of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review of the operations and management of United Nations libraries (A/59/373); requested the Steering Committee "to pursue new strategies for the work of United Nations libraries, which should aim at enhancing the effectiveness of libraries within existing legislative mandates"; took note of the steps taken by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the other member libraries of the Steering Committee to align their activities, services and outputs more closely with the goals, objectives and operational priorities of the Organization; and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-eighth session on the activities of the Steering Committee and the work of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, including on the application of measures to enhance the effectiveness of the libraries within existing legislative mandates.

2. The present report, submitted pursuant to resolution 60/109 B, outlines progress achieved in implementing the new strategic directions for United Nations libraries that are members of the Steering Committee (see annex).

II. Libraries in the United Nations environment

A. Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries

3. The Steering Committee held two meetings in 2005, on 14 July (by videoconference) and a face-to-face meeting in Geneva, on 17 October. Its programme of work had been updated following an earlier meeting in March, when standing subcommittees with representation from all libraries were replaced by working groups. The agenda is now project-driven, allowing for voluntary representation of individual libraries based on their areas of specialization and interest, focusing on: management of United Nations documentation; information skills and learning; electronic resources and the World Wide Web; and knowledge sharing. United Nations libraries are working as a network, exploring common solutions to a range of operations, all of which are affected by new technological developments.

4. During 2005, the work of the Steering Committee has resulted in the following concrete action:

(a) **Increased collaboration on the digitization programme between the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva**. Priority was given to the digitization of Security Council documents. As at the end of March 2006, documentation covering the period from 1975 to 1992 will be available in all official languages in the United Nations Official Document

System (ODS). The Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva has also digitized the documentation of the first sessions of the Commission on Human Rights. In view of the current capital master plan proposal to move the Dag Hammarskjöld Library collections to a remote storage location, the Library is identifying other key documents for digitization. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has taken the lead role in exploring partnerships to speed up the digitization of complete collections of United Nations documents;

(b) **Review of guidelines on content management**. A working group has continued its review of guidelines for the indexing, description and analysis of United Nations documentation. In addition, staff from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva are working with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management on the enhancement of ODS. A plan of action for the re-engineering of work-flows to process United Nations documentation has been launched. Librarians, as experts in taxonomies, content organization and information management, are essential partners in this review process. New management approaches in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library have led to more effective use of staff resources in the processing and indexing of documents;

(c) **Acquisition of electronic resources for the United Nations and United Nations system libraries**. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has continued to act as a clearing house for the purchase of electronic resources for United Nations and United Nations system libraries through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium. That venture has ensured the purchase of electronic resources at a lower cost to the Organization and member agencies, funds and programmes. In addition, the range of products available through the Consortium has grown. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has proposed methods to evaluate the usage of these costly electronic products to ensure that they fulfil actual needs;

(d) **Upgrading information skills and learning in United Nations libraries**. Initiatives are under way to share tools and resources that can be replicated at all duty stations and products that can be shared easily with small and field libraries, depository libraries and members of the Steering Committee. New approaches also include the development of joint training programmes and the organization of virtual seminars to bring together all member libraries. In addition, the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva has developed a training and development needs survey for library staff and has organized training workshops;

(e) **Promoting knowledge sharing**. In addition to the formal meetings of the Steering Committee, which provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and best practices, a new culture of sharing is encouraged in all areas of activity of member libraries. Based on the Dag Hammarskjöld Library knowledge sharing space, developed in Lotus Quickplace, a collaborative electronic workspace was created for all member libraries in which participants can find information and exchange standards, best practices and lessons learned. The personal knowledge management programme, a model piloted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and described in more detail below, will be replicated by the Steering Committee libraries. A collection of knowledge pointers has also been developed and shared among member libraries.

B. Follow-up to the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on United Nations libraries

5. In its report on the review of the operations and management of United Nations libraries, recommendation 1 (A/59/373, para. 38), the Office of Internal Oversight Services stated:

> "To ensure sustained and effective collaboration among the libraries, the Steering Committee should develop and propose a new United Nations library policy for approval by the General Assembly. The new policy should address, inter alia, the future role of the United Nations libraries in light of advanced technologies and the Internet and seek to clarify the mandate of the Steering Committee and its funding sources. The libraries of the United Nations specialized agencies should be invited to participate in the Steering Committee in order to achieve the most comprehensive cooperation among libraries".

The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/109 B, took note with appreciation of the new strategic directions report, which outlined the new approaches for United Nations libraries. The specialized agencies of the United Nations were invited to participate in the work of the Steering Committee at the annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Meeting, which took place in Geneva from 17 to 19 October 2005.

6. Recommendation 2 of the report (A/59/373, para. 39) stated:

> "When developing the United Nations library policy, the Steering Committee should: (i) address the issue of further harmonizing and collaborating on the use of technology and Internet in all United Nations libraries; and (ii) establish a timetable for each action in its work plan and ensure compliance with deadlines".

As noted in paragraph 4 (b) above, the introduction of new enterprise applications for content management will have an impact on the way libraries conduct their operations and will ensure greater consistency in the use of technology across the Organization. The new role assigned to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in the coordination of the United Nations Secretariat Intranet will facilitate this process and ensure that the model is replicated to other libraries for their internal and public websites. Guidelines are being developed to ensure greater consistency among departments.

7. Recommendation 3 of the report (A/59/373, para. 40) called upon the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva to:

> " ... develop and introduce common productivity standards in all major areas of their operations and maintain an appropriate mechanism to assess actual performance against established standards. As part of this process, consideration should be given to reviewing the new performance indicators for the strategic framework (2006-2007) developed by the United Nations Office at Geneva".

As a result of the reorientation process initiated by the Department of Public Information in 2002, a culture of evaluation has permeated all areas of the Department's work. New activities undertaken by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library have been monitored and evaluated. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Library of

the United Nations Office at Geneva have developed common productivity standards in all major areas of their operations, including maintaining statistics on reference queries.

8. Recommendation 4 of the report (A/59/373, para. 41) called upon the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva to:

> " ... treat the transfer of older documents to electronic format as a special project, which would involve resource-sharing. The project should include digitization, retrospective conversion of the old card catalogues and indexing of pre-1979 United Nations documents. The full extent of the tasks should be accurately determined, a strategy and a timetable for completing the tasks formulated and the amount of resources determined and mobilized".

As noted in paragraph 4 (a) above, the digitization of United Nations documentation is treated as a cooperative project between the two libraries and resources are shared to increase efficiency and speed in processing. The division of work is based on the availability of equipment and material at both libraries. Based on this mandate, the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva maintains archival collections of the material it acquires. Priority was therefore given to the retrospective conversion of the card catalogue of the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva, which was completed at the end of 2003. Conversion of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library card catalogue is being conducted as a special project in the context of the capital master plan. The relocation of collections and the elimination of a number of items in the external materials collections will obviate the need to convert cards for such items. Indexing of pre-1979 documents is an ongoing process, conducted in parallel with the digitization programme.

C. Collaboration between the libraries of the United Nations system

9. As noted in paragraphs 4 (c) and 5 above, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has continued to play an active role in inter-agency library activities. In addition to managing the United Nations Consortium, it has provided a new vision for the transformation of United Nations libraries and was responsible for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries (A/AC.198/2005/4) to the above-mentioned 2005 Inter-Agency Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Meeting, which endorsed the report. At the same meeting, the United Nations system libraries were invited to participate in the work of the Steering Committee.

10. At the same meeting, a newly established central gateway to all United Nations library resources was presented and approved by the libraries of the United Nations system. This gateway also includes links to all United Nations system publishing services. The launch of this gateway, which is constantly being updated by individual libraries, rendered the United Nations System Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System defunct, resulting in cost savings for the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), which had been maintaining it.

11. With the completion of the above activities, all recommendations made in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services have now been implemented.

III. New directions for United Nations libraries

A. Becoming centres of knowledge: providing new services and modernizing traditional ones

12. United Nations libraries are moving from their traditional role as independent repositories to networks of knowledge sharing communities, moving from building and maintaining book and periodical collections to facilitating a knowledge-enabled environment and the exchange of information among stakeholders. United Nations libraries are reorienting their products and services, their physical spaces, their staff skills and their working relationships with their colleagues within the Organization in order to offer timely and relevant support to their growing and changing constituencies. They are also redeploying and renewing the skill sets of their staff to meet the needs of a challenging new work environment. United Nations libraries are now providing increasingly personalized service and direct support to constituents, resulting in the more effective dissemination of information. Library staff are learning to adapt to the new environment created by the technology and resources available on the Internet in order to provide access to a range of electronic collections, regardless of their location. Print collections continue to be maintained and new methods of advertising their contents are being explored. To reflect the changes and to provide a new image, it is proposed that the official name of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library be expanded to the "Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge Sharing Centre".

13. One of the key challenges for United Nations libraries is the realignment of services towards operational priorities. The inward focus on traditional technical library work at the United Nations, which was necessary before the existence of networks, has now shifted to a model of service that is oriented towards making connections for its users, between documents and functions, between people and documents and between people and people. As with other institutional libraries worldwide, the client groups of United Nations libraries are faced with managing an overwhelming amount of information and a rapidly changing work environment that continuously introduces new technologies, new networks and new colleagues.

14. Knowledge sharing and content management are essential aspects of management reform. Libraries in all duty stations are rethinking and reinforcing their roles in this regard. During the second quarter of 2005, the Library was given the responsibility of managing the Organization's Intranet, iSeek, in an effort to enhance and improve internal communications. Experiments with new methods were carried out to encourage a dialogue from the top, down, from the bottom, up and across the Organization. This has resulted in a more prominent, pragmatic role in management reform, helping to strengthen the United Nations through better information and knowledge sharing. In addition to revamping the Intranet, the Library developed a Secretariat-wide internal communications strategy. The goal of this strategy is to ensure that all Secretariat staff, regardless of their duty station, have access to the same level of information, as well as to a user-friendly interface linking to enterprise-wide tools. Attention was given to ensuring usability of the Intranet site, accessibility by all duty stations and offices away from Headquarters, including the network of United Nations information centres and services, and peacekeeping missions. The site is updated frequently with new stories and photographs, highlighting events of importance to staff. The underlying blueprint

was to establish a coherent Intranet for United Nations staff worldwide, using a consistent layout and standard technology and providing relevant, up-to-date messages. Although global in reach, some of the content is localized to ensure its relevance to each duty station. Anecdotal evidence and feedback from departmental focal points indicate that the redesigned iSeek is viewed positively by United Nations staff and that the site is becoming the primary source of internal information for them.

15. To adapt to the continually changing information paradigm, new training courses were launched to assist clients in using the plethora of information sources and services available to United Nations audiences. As in previous years, training courses were organized on: accessing United Nations documentation; searching methods to access the wide variety of resources on the Internet; coaching services; and personalized training. Information coaches help staff find and organize information in their offices and at their work stations within the personal knowledge management programme, a new initiative.

16. The personal knowledge management programme aims to create an information management consulting service to assist staff and United Nations delegations in dealing with the increasingly complex information environment through direct support services that are offered on a case-by-case basis to address specific problems. The needs of individual users and small teams are met through a process of discovering knowledge gaps and providing team training and individual coaching in the tools and techniques to help fill them. Staff at all levels and from all sections of the Library were involved in launching the service. Library professionals are being transformed into networking facilitators, essential team members in the United Nations community of knowledge workers, who are helping to change the perception of what the Library does and giving it an expanded presence across the Organization. Through interviews, staff members determined the information needs of staff at large and the permanent missions, and later followed up with coaching sessions to help manage the glut of information received by staff on a daily basis through their desktops, mobile phone devices and from various media. The staff who were surveyed indicated a need for tips, advice and coaching on creating, managing and accessing information, which is what the personal knowledge management programme now offers. By the end of 2005, 48 Library staff members had been trained to become interviewers, having met with over 260 clients and identified coaching requirements. Interview surveys revealed that the most pressing needs for coaching and training were in the following areas: e-mail archiving; finding United Nations documents; and using electronic resources. Other coaching needs cited included: organizing research collections; searching iSeek and the web; understanding the use of desktop management tools and weblogs; and techniques for electronic filing, using Lotus Notes, Quickplace and Microsoft Word. Based on this needs assessment, 11 coaching modules were developed and a collection of 20 knowledge pointers were produced. The one-page documents give tips on using software applications, managing e-mail archives and undertaking a search. The Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva is producing a printed set of the pointers, which will be shared with all members of the Steering Committee. The Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva has adopted a similar strategy of client-focus direct information support services offered to participants in its orientation programme.

17. A close partnership was formed with the Information Technology Services Division in launching both new activities (personal knowledge management programme and iSeek). Future work will involve close collaboration with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Office of Human Resources Management in particular. Satisfaction surveys on the personal knowledge management programme were conducted with Library staff (on involvement in the process) and with clients (on usefulness): 87 per cent of Library staff and 89.7 per cent of clients who responded expressed overall satisfaction.

18. Networked libraries without walls and initiatives, such as the personal knowledge management programme will make United Nations information professionals more visible. Recommendations have been made under the capital master plan, for the Library to be renovated and redesigned, providing an opportunity for more innovation. During the renovation phase, service points, consulting services and collections will need to be set up in various locations to ensure support to clients. Library services will be extended to departments, including staff from groups that have not previously made use of conventional library services. During the change process and beyond, important traditional library functions and services, including essential paper-based collections, will be retained.

19. Another challenge faced by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, other libraries of the United Nations system and libraries worldwide is the shift from print to electronic publishing. An estimated 70 per cent of commercial journals are now available electronically, a trend that has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in subscription prices. At present, the cost of subscribing to such resources represents over 40 per cent of the non-staff resources of the budget of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and is increasing. For clients, this has resulted in the availability of remote access on a round-the-clock basis, but library budgets have been severely impacted and will require new cost-sharing arrangements among user departments. More attention has been given to targeting electronic information in order to ensure that these resources are being used effectively and that they respond to specific user needs.

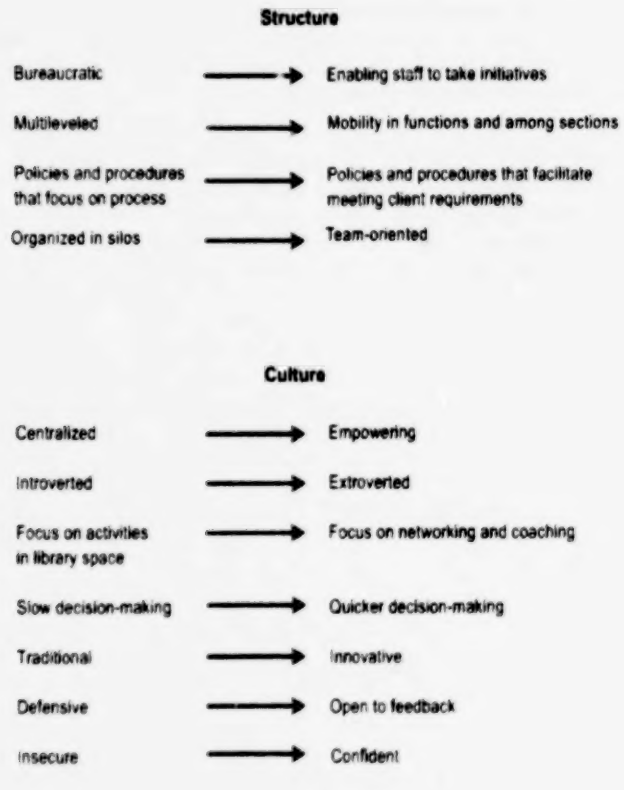
B. Managing the change process: transforming library capacities and services

20. For a change process to be successful, a group of people must serve as its engine, as the catalysts for change. In the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the staff at all levels who were involved in the personal knowledge management programme fulfilled this role. That group, who in terms of organizational structure reports to various sections, served as change agents by participating in the drafting of strategy documents; initiating ideas for new services; launching discussion groups; and leading, supporting and sustaining training efforts for both Library staff and clients. Those activities created a sense of ownership of the change process and ensured their involvement. Both clerical and professional staff were involved in the change process. Not all staff who participated in the personal knowledge management programme were fully engaged in the process; some found it difficult to adapt to the new approach, since it involved far more contact with clients than they were accustomed to. For the most part, however, the new approach forced staff to adopt new roles and challenges that they readily accepted.

21. Staff were also involved in some of the more visible activities, such as the "Lectures and Conversations Series" launched in 2005, by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, with the support of the Government of Sweden, to mark the centenary of the birth of Dag Hammarskjöld. Those events brought together senior management, well-known experts, United Nations officials and missions to discuss a variety of themes, from the legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld to disaster relief and peacekeeping. The launch of the newly designed Intranet in August 2005 provided heightened visibility of those events and other new activities.

22. The innovations described in the present report have brought about a change of perception and increased visibility of Dag Hammarskjöld Library staff. Instead of working mainly being behind the scenes, Library staff are now more active in a wide variety of activities throughout the Organization and are closely involved in managing new projects and events and initiating different ways to make connections. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has made progress in transforming its services, staff capacity and image over the past 12 months. However, more change is planned throughout the next biennium and beyond. Staff will continue to benefit from more training and personal coaching to help them adapt to the process. Communicating positive messages and promoting new activities and a new image will help to break down some of the roadblocks. A retreat was organized for Library staff in December 2005, in which 28 General Service and Professional staff participated. The gathering provided a team-building opportunity and an occasion to share the vision and identify solutions for achieving it. The Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva also organized a training workshop for all staff to reflect on future activities. Figure 1 below provides an overview of some of the objectives of the change process.

Figure 1
Moving from collections to connections



C. Extending the outreach

23. Depository libraries have played a key role in the outreach strategy of the United Nations. However, since those institutions themselves have been transformed, the services to them need to be updated in order to provide new ways of disseminating information and knowledge. A 2004 survey demonstrated that the majority of depository libraries surveyed, including those in developing countries, have Internet access on library premises as follows: 100 per cent in Eastern Europe, Western Europe and North America; 94.2 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, 88 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean; 86.7 per cent in Western Asia; and 76.6 per cent in Africa. All depository libraries have requested increased and better access to electronic information. Print collections require space and are not easily organized. Some depository libraries would like to continue to receive printed documents, in addition to electronic access, although, interestingly, most such requests are from depository libraries in developed countries.

24. Access to electronic information requires technology and infrastructure that many libraries in developing countries lack. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has begun to explore funding opportunities with foundations and other donors to assist in resolving some of the issues so that those institutions can benefit from the wealth of information and knowledge available in United Nations documents and on the Internet. In addition, new ways of encouraging the use of United Nations materials has been explored with those libraries. During the third quarter of 2005, a set of resources, an "Exhibition in a Box", which included publications, flyers and posters, was sent to 400 depository libraries in 145 countries and to all United Nations information centres and services. The materials and posters related to 12 major areas of United Nations activities, which were summarized in a "UN Milestones" poster, the centrepiece of the "Exhibition in a Box". All depository libraries were invited to add to their exhibition any other United Nations-related issues in which their country or region might be interested. All recipients were asked to launch the exhibition on or close to United Nations Day, 24 October 2005. A web page was created for the project, and feedback and photographs received were posted on the site. The majority of depository libraries used those resources to promote their activities locally.

25. The Internal Communications Unit, which is part of the Knowledge Sharing Section of the Library that manages iSeek, is working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to identify coherent approaches to providing information to peacekeeping operations. Desktop delivery of all essential information will facilitate the decision-making process in field operations. The Internal Communications Unit is also providing support and guidelines to offices away from Headquarters in order to ensure the adoption of a common approach to managing content on the Intranet and to improve internal communications. The Chief Librarians at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific were designated content focal points for the new Intranet under iSeek, and their teams work in close cooperation with the Internal Communications Unit.

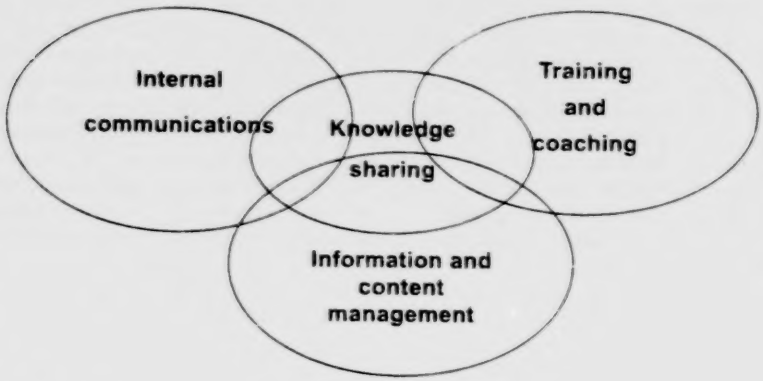
D. Refocus and reorientation

26. A main challenge will be for the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other United Nations libraries to more effectively support the information needs of a diverse

clientele in a continually changing information environment, an environment in which knowledge workers are challenged by the information overload caused by an ever-increasing number and complexity of issues. By streamlining some of the traditional library processes and continuing to retain selective paper-based collections, United Nations libraries will respond to this challenge with a reorientation towards the three main areas of concentration that have been described above and are depicted in figure 2 below:

Figure 2
United Nations libraries: refocus and reorientation

- Information and content management
- Training and coaching
- Internal communications



IV. Conclusions

27. United Nations libraries are becoming key players in the field of knowledge sharing and content management for the Organization and are now in a position to play a more significant role in the reform process, assisting with internal communications and providing better access to information and knowledge. The combined experience, understanding and institutional memory embodied in the United Nations libraries and their staff have the potential to contribute significantly to this effort. United Nations libraries have continued to fulfil their original mandates while adapting innovative approaches, tools and skills for the twenty-first century. Paper collections will be maintained, while new methods of custodianship and preservation will allow library staff to devote more time and effort to discovering and promoting their relevance and value. The objective of this refocus is to ensure the relevancy of United Nations libraries, making them the facilitators of a networked community, and to ensure that their staff become an essential part of the team in the United Nations community of knowledge workers.

Annex

United Nations libraries participating in the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries

The 10 separate United Nations libraries represented on the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries are:

Dag Hammarskjöld Library at United Nations Headquarters in New York

Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva

United Nations libraries at Vienna, which serve the United Nations Office at Vienna, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Sergio Vieira de Mello Library at Nairobi, which includes the libraries of the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations Information Centre

The libraries of the following regional commissions:

Economic Commission for Africa

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

And the libraries of:

United Nations University

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda